

THE AMERICAN NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 10, Vol. XXI.

October, 1847.

Whole No. 250.

SERMON CCCCLX.

BY REV. DAVID MAGEE, D.D.

ELIZABETHTOWN, N. J.

DELIVERED BEFORE THE AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS, AT BUFFALO,
SEPTEMBER 8, 1847.

OUR TRUE ENCOURAGEMENT.

Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high.—ISAIAH, 32: 15.

As regards the final and universal triumphs of the Gospel, no believer in the Bible can entertain a doubt. Glorious things are spoken of Zion, the City of our God, and we are assured, explicitly, that the kingdoms of this world shall one day become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ. That light which now shines on our path, is yet to lighten all the Gentiles, and be the glory of the people of Israel.

Thus it is written, and thus it will be. But what is to secure the ultimate coming of this happy period? Our hope all hangs on one single thing—the promise of the Spirit—and occupying the position we do in the annals of time, we can look neither backward nor forward, without being convinced how dependent we are on such aid. What has been done, teaches us this; and what is still to be done teaches it with even greater emphasis. Every past conquest has been the effect of union and communion with the Divine Comforter; and our ability to carry on the enterprise in a way at all commensurate with the grandeur of the object before us, must be derived from the same source. Even more than former assistance will be needed. Instead of occasional drops of mercy, water must be poured upon the thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.

The text refers to this; and it is too well understood to require

any particular explanation. Suffice it simply to say, that the chapter begins with a cheering account of the approach of a brighter day; but it goes on to tell us, that, in the meantime, a season of gloom and depression would ensue, to be terminated only by the pouring out of the Spirit from on high. This would work a delightful change. Then the wilderness would become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.

No language could be more appropriate to us, in the relation which we, as a Missionary Society, sustain to the conversion of the world. Large as are our resources, numerous as are the laborers we have sent forth, and strong as is the hold which this blessed cause has taken on the affections of the people, we were never more dependent on help from heaven than at this very moment. Without special divine aid we can do nothing. God must plentifully imbue our hearts with the influences of the Spirit, that we may use *the right means for effecting our object*, that we may *prosecute the work with proper energy*, and that we may see *our efforts attended with success*. These are the points which I wish to illustrate and enforce.

L The Spirit of God must be with us, *or we shall not use the right means for converting the world.*

Our undertaking is a vast one, and we are not left in uncertainty as to the way in which it is to be accomplished. That Gospel, which God has given us to spread as well as to enjoy, was made for man, and though there is in it no independent efficacy, it does possess an adaptedness to the renovation of his moral nature. No matter where you meet him, or whatever be the depth of his depravity, this is the remedy for his ruin. There is here an ordained channel through which the Spirit of God operates to change the heart, make the poor Pagan a new creature, turn the desert into a goodly land, and fill a world of crime and sorrow with righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Sending the knowledge of Christ abroad through the nations, is the appointed method of saving men. We know of no other means—having thus the seal of heaven upon them—for subverting the kingdom of Satan, rooting idolatry out of the earth, and restoring our race to fellowship with their Maker.

The commission under which we act runs thus—to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified. To bring about this result, we are confined to a single instrumentality—the pure, unadulterated Gospel—that Gospel which we ourselves have received, and wherein we stand. This we are pledged, as far as in us lies, to send abroad to all them that dwell on the face of the earth, assured that nothing is wanting to cause the truth to triumph everywhere, but the accompanying power of the Holy Spirit. Our great busi-

ness is to teach men that they have ruined themselves by sin, to lead them to disclaim all righteousness of their own, and to bring them to a cordial trust in the blood of the cross. We must give the heathen that very Gospel which was preached on the day of Pentecost, which the Reformation carried into the heart of Germany, which was found in the caves and mountains of Scotland when she was faithful to her covenant, which our Puritan Fathers brought with them from the old world, and which glowed with divine life in the bosom of an Edwards, a Brainerd, and a Davies. This is the panoply in which we are to wage war with the powers of darkness. We have no other armour.

This Gospel we are to send, in simplicity and godly sincerity, to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. It must be our determination, at every stage of progress, not to know anything save Jesus Christ, and him crucified; and so long as we pursue the work in this way, we may be cheered with the conviction that an instrumentality on which God has a thousand times made his impress, will not be employed in vain. This can save a soul from death, and it can save a world from death. If we ever forget that there is a principle of vitality in the genuine Gospel—the plan of salvation, the story of the crucifixion—when thus applied, we shall find the very sinews of missionary effort all cut at once. The words that I speak unto you, said the Great Teacher, they are spirit, and they are life. There shall be a handful of corn in the earth, upon the top of the mountains, the fruit whereof shall shake like Lebanon.

It is more faith in God's instrumentality that we need. We look at the Gospel, and what is it, if left to itself, but the declaration of a fact—the narrative of an event—the revelation of a doctrine? How can it change the heart of a heathen, and create new sensations, and lead to new solitudes, and awaken new joys there, to tell him that in Christ we have redemption, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace? The cause seems unequal to the effect. But when there goes, along with the statement of such facts, an unseen agency, more powerful than that which makes the mountains tremble, all difficulty is removed. The Gospel is not the breath of man, it is the power of God. It is not a feeble weapon, it is the sword of the Spirit. It is not a mere tale of wonder, it is a message of life. Nothing that the world has ever seen descends so deeply into the seat of human sympathies, or works such revolutions in the character of man.

The kind of duty we have to perform is obvious. We but go forth, in the persons of our missionaries, to declare, in the school, along the way-side, and at the temple of idolatry, that which we ourselves have seen, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life. There is no necessity for our

being told, that this is God's method for working salvation in the midst of the earth. Never can it be matter of surprise to us, that the bare reading of the story of the crucifixion, in the lonely tent of a man of God in Greenland, should be attended with such power as to strike the mind of a half-sleeping heathen at the door, and prompt him to exclaim, "Those are precious words, let me hear them again." We must forget our own conversion, before these things can appear strange.

It is no part of our business to make experiments for the relief of human wo, or the removal of human guilt. We have a Saviour to speak of; whose blood we know cleanseth from all sin; we have the invitation to give: whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely; and then, to complete our resources, we have the promise, Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. This is our reliance. Thus equipped, we go out to fight God's battle among men. And sad will be the day when our compassion for sinners begins to dig for itself a channel different from that in which the Saviour's flowed, or our impatience to get the work done leads us to the use of means such as he has not authorized. All we can do—all we are allowed to do—is to take our stand at the foot of the cross, and point the heathen to its bleeding victim. Our sole expedient for saving men from hell, is the atonement of Calvary, the expiatory sacrifice of the Son of God; that righteousness which is unto all, and upon all them that believe. These constitute the glad tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. When our sons and our daughters leave us to cross oceans, and climb mountains, and journey over valleys, we must charge them to repeat everywhere the story of the apostacy, and of the death of Christ to remove the curse. We must exhort them to say, God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life.

These are the means by which we are to accomplish our object, and we need to be kept to them without deviation or faltering. This can be done only by such a measure of divine influence, daily exerted upon our hearts, as shall cause the Gospel to loom up largely and gloriously before us, and inspire us with a perfect confidence in its divinely appointed efficacy. As a missionary organization, the presence with us of the Good Spirit, is indispensable. No resolutions, however stringent, to require an orthodox creed in those who enter the foreign field—no well adjusted frame-work of ecclesiastical supervision—no votes of councils or synods to commission only good men and true, will secure the giving of real, vital Christianity to the nations. These things may be useful and important, but they are not sufficient. The moment we ourselves become indifferent to the doctrines of total depravity, justification by faith, and regeneration by the Spirit,

the trumpet we blow on the other side of the globe, will give an uncertain sound. We shall plant no better religion than we possess.

There is a downward tendency in man—in the best of men—and in the best of men engaged in the holiest work, and which nothing can effectually counteract, but a constantly exerted divine influence. Charters, subscriptions, pledges, will not do it. These, when the heart gets wrong, are weak as a thread of tow. God, the Holy Ghost, must be with us at every step, or we shall even lose those things which we have already wrought, and never receive a full reward.

Let me add: this view of the Gospel, as the wisdom of God, and the power of God, will impart such an aspect of simplicity to our aims, and give such a type of homogeneousness to our efforts, as will help us to move forward with harmony in our great work. We shall not then lay out our strength on extraneous matters, or matters which, though valuable in themselves, do not properly belong to us as a Missionary Society. Our object, be it never forgotten, is not to make any direct attack upon forms of civil government, however cruel and despotic, or to carry a crusade into the arrangements of social life, however inconsistent they may seem with the highest degree of human happiness. These may be great evils here, and they may lie very much in our way, but the first assault is not to be made on these out-works. If we feel as Paul felt, or as Martyn felt, or as Christ felt, our chief desire will be to secure, for the real Gospel, a lodgment in the heart, assured that this is the divine method of reforming the life. We need not fear. Truth is like chain-shot—give one link its direction, and it will draw after it the entire charge. Make the heathen Christians, and they will not fail to become men.

Such is our work, and such are the appliances with which we are furnished for carrying it on. The Gospel, preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, is all we need to recover men from their sins, and make this world of ours vocal with the high praises of God. This comprises the length and breadth of our duty. Our service is performed when, in reliance on divine aid, we have testified in the face of all nations repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. But,

II. Unless the Holy Spirit be with us, *we shall never prosecute our work with proper energy.*

No missionary enterprise can be expected to flourish, which does not take fast hold on the hearts, and deeply move the sympathies of its friends. This is a cause of too much import to be carried on lukewarmly. Some years ago, a number of young men, candidates for service in foreign lands, in the Papal Church, pledged themselves to God and to each other to be faithful, by each opening a vein in his arm and writing his name in his own

blood. I plead not for this. It may have been superstition. But if covenanting in blood can bind man to his duty, then we are bound with ligatures which can never be broken.

It is easy to see that one of the main purposes of the Church on earth, is her own self-extension. We learn, on every page of the history of the early propagation of the Gospel, that the apostles did not ordain elders in every city, chiefly, much less exclusively, to keep ground already gained, or to rejoice in conquests already made. With them the field was the world. Their plan was an out-going, an aggressive one. But this is a kind of work which we shall never follow up with a full heart, except as our desire to spread the Gospel, as well as our individual appreciation of it, is quickened by the Spirit of God. Neither of these things is natural to us, and unless supplied, as was the oil in the prophet's vision, they will grow weak and vanish away. We know, by sad experience, that our persuasion of a personal welcome to trust in Christ, becomes indistinct, whenever we are left to ourselves; and we also know that when thus left, we forget the claims of a dying world.

The Church, every one admits, ought to place the sending of the Gospel to the heathen among the most solemn and clearly ascertained of all her duties. It belongs to her to see that her members are kept apprised of the aspects and wants of this vast undertaking, cheerfully providing the means for every newly projected occupation of the enemy's country, and carefully watching over young Christians of promise, to mark the developments of their character, as to any special fitness for such service. These are points in relation to which there can be no doubt. Who can hesitate to believe that the bringing forward of candidates for this high employment, should be an object of the deepest interest to every Minister of the Gospel, every professor of theology, and every ecclesiastical judicatory? Parents ought to prize such a post for a beloved son or daughter, above one in the retinue of an ambassador to the mightiest potentate on earth. Daily should prayer be made that the Holy Ghost would separate our Barnabases and our Sauls to the work of Christian Missions.

But how are we to get up to this state of feeling, and this standard of action? We shall but practice an imposition upon ourselves if we merely compare what is now doing with what was done a few years ago, instead of summoning courage to ask what the opening providences of God require at our hands, or what our own good hope through grace should prompt us to undertake. All seems bright and animated enough, when mingling in an immense congregation like this, to exchange Christian salutations, and to sharpen each the countenance of his friend, by the rehearsal of some striking incident. We might almost suppose that the tribes of the Lord had assembled to decide which should have the honor

of going up first to possess the land. There are ministers enough, and friends of the Redeemer enough to move the world. But let us beware how we take this as the actual gauge of missionary zeal among us. We can attend anniversaries, and make speeches, and indulge in the luxury of pleasant feeling, better than we can go into our closets and pray, "Thy kingdom come," and better than we can write holiness to the Lord on all our possessions and enjoyments. Alas! we have very little of the mind that was in him who cried out, in relation to his work, "How am I straitened till it be accomplished!" Never shall we act with energy until we have more of the Spirit of God.

This is no time for self-felicitation. If we are in advance of some by-gone ages, we fall most reproachfully behind the feeling and effort of primitive times. The records of the struggles of the early disciples of the Savior with the Paganism of the world, brief as these records are, furnish proof of the most conclusive kind, against us. How they toiled and suffered, we well know, for the statement is, that to their power, yea, and beyond their power, they gave of their substance, praying the Apostles with much entreaty, to take upon them the ministering to the Saints. No wonder that the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed. Calamitous as the times were, we find the religion of the crucified one triumphing, in a few centuries, over ten violent persecutions, and then, instead of being shorn of her strength, putting on the purple, and sitting down on the throne of the Cæsars.

But now, alas, half our strength has to be expended in trying to keep our enterprise up to lines already reached. Instead of onward movements, enlarging year by year, to correspond with the calls, which an open world, and fields everywhere white to the harvest, are addressing to us, we seem, so far as men and money, and new stations are concerned, to be almost stationary; yes, and this too, at a time, when every branch of secular business is borne forward on such a tide of prosperity, as the land has never known before.

Why this falling off from the zeal and self-denial of the first disciples? Only give us the same implicit faith in the realities of the world to come, the same abiding conviction of the value of the soul, the same unshaken reliance on the blood of the cross, and above all, the same accompanying influence of the Spirit of God, and we can work as well as primitive believers. As for external means and resources, we are better off than they ever were. Not only have we wealth on our side, which they had not, and science, which they had not, and the countenance of civil governments, which they had not, but we have the Bible translated, and the means of translating it, into almost every language under heaven. We can do what they did—carry the Gospel to every city—and then we can do what they did not, and could not do—leave copies of the word of God in every city.

So far as resources are concerned, and acquaintance with the condition of the world, and rapidity of communication with lands afar off, we have advantages over all the friends of the Redeemer, of past ages, inspired and uninspired. But in one thing, many of them excelled us. They felt—as I fear we do not—their need of power from on high, and go where they might, they seem to have carried with them a never failing assurance that, when they planted and watered, God would give the increase. This was their grand distinction over modern times. It was not simply that they could speak with tongues, having never learned them—it was not that it was given them in the same hour what they should say—nor was it that they could confirm their testimony by signs and wonders following. These things did not change the hearts of honorable men and women not a few. It was not thus that a great company of the priests became obedient to the faith. There must be along with all this, and in addition to it all, the working of that same power, which wrought in Christ, when he was raised from the dead, to give the truth any saving effect. This they sought, and this they enjoyed. O, had we the same confidence in divine aid, we should go forward with energy, and a voice would soon be heard, saying to the North, give up; and to the South, keep not back. Bring thy sons from far, and thy daughters from the ends of the earth.

For my part, I despair of ever seeing the Church come up to any suitable standard of praying, and giving, and doing, until the Spirit is more copiously poured upon us from on high. Nothing else can reach the secret place of feeling in these cold bosoms of ours, or indite those effectual, fervent, supplications which avail much, or open the purse of this money-loving generation. We are shut up to this single resource. It only remains to say,

III. That the Spirit must be given us, or we shall never see *our efforts crowned with success.*

In no other way can one chase a thousand, or two put ten thousand to flight. There is something in a simple dependence on divine help, which will not fail to impart to our labors a character so earnest and decided as to betoken a favorable result; while, at the same time, it will be sure to invest them with a becoming air of sobriety and self-distrust. We always work best ourselves, when we feel that God is working in us both to will and to do. This is an infallible cure for despondency. How can difficulties, be they what they may, depress the man who really believes that the heart of the imperious Brahmin, the fiery Druze, or the degraded Zulu, is in the hand of the Lord, as the clay in the hand of the potter? This is encouragement enough. The floods may lift up—the floods may lift up their voice—yea, the floods may lift up their waves, but thou, O Lord, on high, art mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.

If we only use the right means, in the right way, failure is impossible. Long ago was the matter settled that the seed of the woman should bruise the Serpent's head; and how can we entertain a doubt, as we trace this promise on, and find it amplified and rendered more distinct by successive prophets of the Most High, until at length God is manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up into glory. It is no more an open question whether nations shall come bending to him, and kings bow down before him. This point is fixed, and all misgiving is sinful. Once it was sublimely said, fear not, you carry Cesar and his fortunes; but now it is said, in language of far higher and nobler sublimity, fear not, for God is with you, and sooner or later your work shall be rewarded. Confidence in an invisible arm is, of itself, an element of prosperity. Read the history of men who have been strong, and done exploits in the world, and you will find that they were carried steadily forward by a confidence, which scarcely ever forsook them, in supernatural aid. It was so with that remorseless tyrant who styled himself the Scourge of God—it was so with Cortes, as he trampled unoffending nations under his bloody feet—it was so with Cromwell, when he bound kings with chains and princes with fetters of iron—it was so with Washington, as he lifted up his head serenely above the clouds and storms of the Revolution—it was so, in a better, higher, nobler sense, with Luther, and Whitfield, and Paul. Nothing so nerves the arm and strengthens the heart, as confidence in God. Who art thou, O great mountain! Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain.

This is a point which we ought to ponder again and again. I grant that the Gospel which we are laboring to send out over the world, is so little after man, as well in the doctrines it inculcates, as in the duties it enjoins, that we can have no hope of its ultimate and universal triumph, but in the belief of an accompanying divine operation. This is true everywhere. Even here, among ourselves, where a general Christian sentiment exists, where the laws and usages of society favor a profession of godliness, and where the labors of the preacher are enforced by living epistles for Christ, known and read of all men—we have nothing else to depend upon. What, then, shall we do without the Spirit of God in a work which carries us out far beyond the range of all evangelical influence? Those who go forth to convert men in lands where every train of thought, and every prejudice of education, and every habit of life, are cast in a Pagan mould, must find themselves weak as babes, except as they are girded with strength from on high.

But here light breaks in upon us. No antecedent preparation is necessary to encourage our hopes, when we carry the Gospel to the dark places of the earth. The footsteps of Revelation do not require to be preceded by the march of science, nor does the effi-

cacy of the story of the Cross need to be prepared for by any previous culture of mind or manners. So far as respects such auxiliaries, the Gospel is competent to go alone. We may safely give it as a first lesson. The simple recital of God's plan of saving men, attended by that almighty influence which we are fully justified in expecting, meets the savage and tames him, the barbarian and civilizes him, the Hottentot and elevates him, the Dyak and subdues him. An omnipotent energy goes along with the oft-repeated tale. We may liken it to the silent and noiseless influence of the sun, visiting us with his morning beams, and rejoicing as a strong man to run a race—or to the quiet and serene efficacy of the dew, as it descends with the shades of the evening, to spread fertility abroad over the earth. These energies are so mild in their movements, as not to awaken infancy in its cradle, or disturb old age on its weary bed. But quiet and potent as are such operations of nature, they are only emblems of an equally quiet, though infinitely more potent operation of grace which, in the manifold wisdom of God, is made to attend the simple annunciation of the Gospel.

We rest with confidence here. It is the purpose of the Father thus to give the Son a seed to serve him. On the strength of a prediction so encouraging, we may press forward, assured that God will take out of the nations a people for himself, and that in no tribe or city, where the Gospel is faithfully preached, will there fail to be a remnant, according to the election of grace. What if our efforts are powerless in themselves? We have only, in obedience to the divine command, to fill the valley of Edom with ditches, and the water to supply them will, in due time, come, either from the clouds, or the bowels of the earth. Moses hesitated about attempting to deliver his brethren. But he, at length, went on, and the Nile was turned into blood, and hail stones and coals of fire descended, and darkness covered the land—and the first born died—and Pharaoh let the people go. Nothing is too hard for the Lord.

Jesus is to see of the travel of his soul and be satisfied, and the spirit, in the hearts of believers, is to secure to him this reward. We anticipate the time, when France, with her little remnant of true faith revived, shall build again her long since dilapidated Huguenot temples—when the active penetrating mind of Germany shall work out a second Reformation, more glorious than the first—and when all Europe shall inquire after the old paths, and recover the precious doctrine of justification by faith. India too, with her idolatrous sons, including the kingdoms which have gone after the false Prophet, with his crescent, his battle field, and his Sensual Paradise—and China, at whose walls we were so long, and so anxiously waiting, with all her uncounted millions shall welcome the Gospel of the blessed God—yes, and even Africa,

poor Africa, steeped in crime and sorrow at home, and everywhere abroad goaded and peeled by the bloody whip of the task master, shall come forward and lift up her head among the ransomed nations, and rejoice in the liberty wherewith Christ sets his people free. These lands are all to join our own, with her noble rivers, her extensive lakes, her beautiful prairies, and her lofty mountains, in placing the crown upon the head of Immanuel. Blessed prospect! May God hasten it in his time!

Nay more—reality already begins to mingle with prediction, and accomplishment follows upon the heels of anticipation. When we reflect upon the steady and long continued blessings which have descended upon our labors at Ceylon—the wonders of mercy wrought in the Sandwich Islands—almost renewing the days of old—the solemn movement among the Armenians, bringing forth in such lovely forms all the fruits of the Spirit—and the convictions and conversions now occurring in the midst of the Nestorians, it seems to me, if we should altogether hold our peace, the very stones would cry out. With all that has thus been predicted, and all that has thus been achieved spread out together before our eyes, can it be deemed premature to say: O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain. O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength, lift it up, be not afraid—say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God.

Such, fathers and brethren, are some of the views which it seemed to me important to present, on this occasion. Called to the discharge of a duty, which no one can expect to perform a second time, it has been my heart's desire and prayer to God, to be led to suggest such trains of thought, as might benefit myself, and my fellow laborers in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. This object I have sought to gain, by fixing our minds on the Holy Spirit of promise, as our good hope in seeking to convert the world.

Now, as we sit here, and contemplate all this, what is the first feeling that springs up in every pious bosom? I speak for you, disciples of the Savior! It is one of gratitude to God—gratitude that we ourselves have heard the joyful sound, and been brought to bow to the sceptre of King Jesus; gratitude that to us is given the privilege of being almoners of salvation to a lost world—a privilege which Gabriel before the throne might covet—a gratitude that we have the pledge of an influence to accompany our efforts, which shall eventually cause the truth everywhere to triumph. It is for this, among other reasons, that we are kept a little while out of heaven. Christ will have us suffer with him, and labor with him awhile, that we may, at length, be more fully glorified together. Our business then is, not to sit down content with the fact that we have been begotten again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection

of Jesus Christ from the dead; or to rejoice in trophies already won; or successes already gained among the heathen, but to gird up our loins anew for a further onset upon the kingdom of darkness.

For this we have special encouragement in the times in which our lot is cast. Never is it to be forgotten, that we are not only living under what the Apostle calls the ministration of the Spirit, but we are now approaching that period of it, when developments of mercy are to be expected, more numerous and striking than have distinguished any past age. The great promise of the Old Testament was fulfilled eighteen hundred years ago. Thus it was that wisdom built her house, and hewed out her pillars, and killed her beasts, and mingled her wine, and furnished her table, and ever since she has been sending out her maidens, and crying in the high places of the cities. But we want one blessing more; the promise of the New Testament, the pouring out of the Spirit. An atonement has been made, commensurate with the exigencies of the world, and all that we can need additional is, the coming of that blessed Comforter, whose presence in the Church is more than a compensation for the departure of the Saviour. This is the gift in which are wrapped up the destinies of the race.

Nothing else can keep alive the missionary zeal of the Church. It will not do to rely upon such highly wrought descriptions of the sorrows of those who hasten after another god, as the talents and eloquence of the friends of this good cause may now and then give. Emotion may, in this way, be excited in our breasts, and tears drawn from our eyes. But we cannot calculate upon feeling thus awakened; the fountain is not full enough. The impression is not abiding enough. Besides, the oft-repeated looking upon the miseries of heathenism, apart from all divine influence, like familiarity with any other miseries, must tend to harden rather than soften the heart. We need to be impelled by a higher motive. To hold out in such a work as this, we must have the indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

Hence, too, arises all our encouragement. Faith in the efficacy of the Gospel, when preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, is the mainspring of every effort to save the heathen. Man's utter ruin is a fact, written so clearly upon every page of the Bible, and portrayed so vividly in the whole history of the race, that it cannot be gainsayed. That the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin is also a fact, which no believer in revelation can hesitate for a moment to admit. Now, all that is necessary is for the remedy to be applied to the disease, and that is done, done effectually and gloriously, when the Spirit takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto men. This is the agency, which can render our dead and dark world instinct with the presence, and radiant with the beauties of holiness.

But alas, we have very little of the special presence of the blessed Spirit. The discouragements, which press upon us, and weaken our strength in the work, come not, I am sorry to say, from the other side of the globe, but arise from the state of the Churches in our own land. There is nothing disheartening in the intelligence which reaches us from abroad, but we are grieved with the lukewarmness at home. We are not straitened in the promise, or Providence, or Grace of God, but we are straitened, most sadly straitened, by the apathy, and worldliness, and declension of the Church. O, for a general and powerful revival of religion! We must have it. The work cannot advance in any other way. It is impossible for the stream to rise above the fountain.

Our duty, Christian friends, all converges to a single point. It is prayer, prayer—prayer for the spirit that we need. Such prayer as was offered by that little band that waited at Jerusalem for the promise of the Father. Such prayer as Brainerd offered on the banks of the Susquehanna, and Martyn on the plains of India. Such prayer as was offered by the dying Bakus, when he asked for the privilege of getting out of his bed, to lift up his soul once more to God. This is a blessing which we cannot do without. I would call, then, upon every blood-bought disciple of the Saviour here this evening. I would lift up my voice in notes loud enough to reach every Christian in the land. I would send out an affectionate exhortation to our brethren and sisters abroad, and say, ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

Go ask your Father in heaven, that the coming twelve months may be signalized everywhere, among the Churches here and at all our missionary stations in nominal Christendom, and in lands of pagan darkness, by the pouring down upon us of the Spirit of God.

I feel emboldened to press this point, because I know that if that voice could reach us again, to which we loved to listen on these hallowed occasions, and which was heard in tones of such sublime serenity, amidst the ocean's roar and the work of death, it would be lifted up with more than all its former pathos and power, to charge us to pray for the Spirit of God. Two things, that beloved brother never forgot—the atonement of Christ, and the work of the Spirit. I knew him well from the time when his face was first irradiated with the smiles of a newly cherished hope, until the master came, in the midst of storm, and waves, and darkness, to call him to himself; and I can testify, that never, at home or abroad, in the repose of his own fireside, or the fatigues of journeys, did he forget his indebtedness to Christ and the Spirit.

Blest Saint! Thy voice is hushed, but thy example shall not

be lost upon us. Thy presence is no more seen here, but we will remember the cheerful and confiding features of thy face. We miss thee from our assemblies, but we know that thou dost still love the heathen.

That good man is gone, and we shall never all meet again. Whatever acquaintance most of us can hope to have in this world, we are forming now in this holy convocation, while deliberating on the great interests of the Redeemer's kingdom among men, and renewing our pledges of fidelity to him over the symbols of his broken body, and shed blood. O, may our intercourse be such that we shall review it with pleasure, when we come to cast our crowns at the feet of Immanuel.

SERMON CCCCLXI.

BY REV. ENOCH POND, D.D.

PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY, THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, BANGOR, ME.

ORTHODOXY NOT INCONSISTENT WITH THE DIVINE BENEVOLENCE.

"God is love."—1 JOHN, 4: 8.

THAT "God is love," is here asserted on the authority of Jehovah himself. After such an announcement, to attempt to prove the proposition would be more than superfluous. It would be a virtual impeachment of the truth and sufficiency of Scripture. It would be as much as to say, that a positive declaration of God's word was not worthy of credence, unless supported by other evidence. But though the proposition in the text requires no proof, it may require explanation; and my object, in the following discourse, will be,

- I. To explain it. And,
- II. To show its consistency with the leading principles of the orthodox faith.

I. "God is love." The love here spoken of is that of *benevolence*; a wishing well to the universe of being; an earnest preferring and seeking of the highest universal good. This love of benevolence enters into, it constitutes the root and element of all holiness. The law of God, in its spirit, requires nothing else. Love, in this

sense, is represented in the Scriptures as "the bond of perfectness;" the "fulfilling of the law;" and as that on which "hang all the law and the prophets." It is represented in the text as comprising the whole of the Divine character, "God is love."

The language here used refers, of course, not to the *substance*, the *essence* of the Deity, but to his affections, his exercises, his moral character. Benevolence is not a natural, but a *moral* attribute of God. His whole character is one of love.

Love always has an object. To suppose the affection of love to exist without an object—love, where there is nothing loved, would be an absurdity. What, then, are the *objects* of Divine love? Or, in other words, *what does God love*; and in what *measure* and *manner* is his love exercised?

In the first place, God loves *himself*, as he deserves; and that is with a supreme affection. He has a supreme regard, as he should have, for his own glory. For any other being in the universe to love himself supremely, would be to love himself out of all proportion. It would be selfishness. But it is no selfishness in God to love himself supremely; for he is really worthy of supreme affection. His interests and honor are more to be regarded than those of any, or of all, other beings. If his love is disinterested and impartial; if he loves every being—and himself among the rest—according to its intrinsic worthiness, then he *must* love himself more than all. Accordingly, the Scriptures represent him as having a supreme regard for himself, or as being himself the end of his own creation. "The Lord hath made all things for *himself*." "For *thy pleasure* they are and were created."

I remark, secondly, God loves his *creatures*, all and each of them, according to its intrinsic worthiness, considered as a part of the infinite whole. God loves the blessed inhabitants of heaven not beyond what is fit and right; but precisely *according to* what is fit and right; not enough to prompt him to bless them beyond what is in itself proper, and what the greatest good of the whole requires, but simply *as* the greatest good requires. Love for the saints and angels of heaven going beyond this, would be a childish, partial affection. Love, falling short of this, would be imperfect and sinful from defect.

God loves, with a love of benevolence, the inhabitants of hell; and in the precise measure that has just been stated; not enough to screen them from merited punishment—that punishment which their sins deserve, and which the highest good of the whole requires to be inflicted; for this, again, would be a childish, partial affection. It would be a weakness, an imperfection in the Divine character. But God loves the inhabitants of hell enough to prevent him from punishing them beyond their deserts, or beyond what the greatest good of the whole demands. His love for them, therefore, is strictly *impartial*, and their sufferings are, in the largest and best

sense, a fruit of love—love to the universe—a holy and benevolent regard for his own glory, and the greatest good.

God loves the world, not enough to save it at the expense of his own honor, and to the injury of the universe; for this, again, would be a childish and partial love. But he loves it enough to devise and open a way in which salvation can be freely offered to it, in perfect consistency with his own honor as a Sovereign, and the best interests of that universe over which he reigns. He loves it enough to send his only-begotten Son to die for it, that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but have everlasting life.†

God loves sinners under the Gospel, not enough to save them in a rejection of the Gospel, and while they pour contempt on its gracious provisions. But he loves them enough to continue to them the abused blessings of his providence, and the means of his grace—to strive with them, and cry after them, and do all he consistently can do, while probation lasts, to bring them to the knowledge and acceptance of his mercy:

God loves his own people here in the world, not enough to exempt them from trials and afflictions—from that measure of chastisement which his own glory and their best good require. But he loves them too well either to afflict or prosper them other than in faithfulness; either to give or withhold more than is consistent with a wise regard for their best interests.

In short, God is love to being in general, and to every individual being, in fit and due proportion. He loves himself more than all other beings, because he is intrinsically worthy of such a measure of love. And he loves every individual of his creatures, from the highest to the lowest, from the greatest to the least, the good and the bad, the intelligent and the merely sentient, in exact proportion to its intrinsic worthiness of his regards.

It is in this extended, universal sense, that “God is love;” or that love may be said to enter into and comprise the whole moral perfection of the Deity. Every moral attribute which goes to constitute and adorn his character is, in its element, its essence, love. Thus justice, considered as an attribute, is love, prompting him, as moral governor, to seek the good of his dominions, by rewarding the obedient and punishing the disobedient; and each according to the measure of his deservings. And mercy is love, prompting him (so far as with safety and propriety it can be done) to remit the stern claims of justice, and treat his guilty creatures better than they deserve. And God’s truth, considered as an attribute, is love, prompting him to conform all his declarations and representations to the exact reality of things. And faithfulness is love, prompting him to accomplish his promises, and execute his threatenings, and fulfil all the reasonable expectations of his people. And so of every other moral attribute or perfection which goes to constitute the holy character of God. Love, benevolence, enters

into and forms the basis of them all. Love is that essential ingredient, that "bond of perfectness," by which all are assimilated and united; so that, in setting forth the moral excellence of the Deity, we have only to say, in the brief and expressive language of the text, that "God is love."

It is thought by many, that this declaration is inconsistent with the leading features of the orthodox theology. Orthodoxy, it is said, represents the Divine Being as arbitrary, partial, capricious, cruel; doing his own pleasure, without regard to the happiness of his creatures; requiring beyond what they are able to perform, and punishing them out of all proportion to their deserts. Accordingly we find the declaration in the text a favorite one with *liberal* religionists of every description. They have it inscribed on their pulpits, their churches, the covers of their Bibles, and I had almost said, on the borders of their garments.

Such being the case, it is important that I proceed to show,

II. That no one of the peculiar principles of orthodoxy is at all inconsistent with the Divine benevolence, or with the declaration that God is love. I say the *peculiar* principles of orthodoxy; for to go into a consideration of difficulties, which lie no more against orthodoxy than against every other system of religion which acknowledges the being and the government of God—such, for example, as those growing out of the existence and the prevalence of sin and misery—would lead to a wider field of discussion than we have now the opportunity to enter.

The principles of orthodoxy most commonly supposed to contravene the Divine benevolence, are those of Divine Sovereignty, of total depravity, of atonement, of election and reprobation, and of eternal punishment. Let us proceed, then, to an examination of each of these doctrines, with a view to show its consistency with the declaration that *God is love*. And,

1. The doctrine of *Divine Sovereignty*. What is the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty? This inquiry is the more important, because the subject is so frequently misunderstood. There are those who *will* have it, that the sovereignty of God is an arbitrary sovereignty, and who, whenever he is represented to them as a sovereign, can only think of him as a cruel and capricious being. What, then, is the proper Christian doctrine of Divine Sovereignty? It was well expressed by Nebuchadnezzar, that old monarch of Babylon, after the recovery of his reason, and after what, I hope, was his conversion: "He doeth according to his will, in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" In fewer words, the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty is simply this: *God does as he pleases*. "He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he hath compassion on whom he will have compassion." His "counsel shall stand, and he will

do all his pleasure." Everywhere, and at all times, *God does as he pleases*. But what does God please to do? This is a very important inquiry. Does he please to act unreasonably, arbitrarily, capriciously, cruelly? If this be true, then is he, indeed, an arbitrary and capricious sovereign. But is this true? Does any believer in Divine Sovereignty so regard it? God does as he pleases; but *he pleases to do for ever right*. He pleases to act, perpetually and universally, from the best reasons, according to the dictates of infinite wisdom and goodness. His pleasure, therefore, is but another name for *goodness, benevolence*; and the doing of his pleasure, or, in other words, his *sovereignty*, is but the acting out of love. In this view—which is the view taken by all orthodox Christians—there can be no inconsistency or discrepancy between the love and the sovereignty of God. The two doctrines perfectly harmonize; the love of God being the grand motive, the mainspring of sovereignty, and sovereignty being but the acting forth of love.

We come, then, to the second doctrine mentioned; I mean that of *total depravity*. Total depravity is rather an ambiguous phrase. To many it is an odious phrase. It is not a favorite one with me; and yet, when properly explained, it expresses a great and important truth—a fundamental article of the Christian religion. Total depravity is but another name for *entire sinfulness*. It implies, not that the subject of it is as bad as he can be, or that he is necessarily vicious, or that he is destitute of all amiable, natural, and social qualities; but that he is destitute of that "*holiness* without which no man can see the Lord;" and that all his moral exercises and affections are sinful. And such, the Scriptures assure us, is the state of the natural, unrenewed man, everywhere. His heart is "full of evil," and "fully set in him to do evil." "Every imagination and thought of his heart are only evil, and that continually." In him—that is, in his flesh, "there dwelleth no good thing." Nor is this alarming fact at all inconsistent with the Divine benevolence. I assume here, what all respectable religionists admit, that the existence of sin, and consequently of sinners, is somehow consistent with the Divine benevolence. But if it is not inconsistent with God's goodness that there should be sinners in the world, no more is it that there should be *great* sinners, even totally depraved and corrupted sinners. A good being may have enemies, bitter, determined enemies. Our Lord Jesus Christ was goodness itself; yet how many hated him without a cause, and persecuted him even unto death! So God may have enemies of the most malign and depraved character, and yet be the perfection of goodness. If it is not inconsistent with God's goodness, that men should sin against him some, no more is it that they should sin *all*—that they should

make themselves *entirely* sinful—that they should become totally corrupted and depraved. God's goodness is not impeached or diminished by men's wickedness. How can it be? He is not the perpetrator of it. He has had no concern with it, except to detest it; to do all he consistently can do to deliver them from it; and where (without too great a sacrifice) this cannot be done, to overrule it for a greater good.

The third doctrine is that of *atonement* by the death and sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ. The apparent inconsistency between this doctrine and that of the text, lies in God's causing an innocent person to suffer in place of the guilty; or, to use the language of the prophet, in his laying on his own Son "the iniquities of us all." And I freely acknowledge, that if the Son of God had been caused to suffer *against his will*, or *without his own free and full consent*, the difficulty presented would be insuperable. The atonement would become an act of injustice, of cruelty. But the sufferings of Christ were *not* laid upon him against his will. He was throughout a voluntary, consenting sufferer. When the time had arrived for his appearance on the earth, he is represented as saying, with the greatest promptness, "Lo, I come!" And while here in the flesh, and in the near prospect of his approaching sufferings, he said: "No man taketh my life from me, but *I lay it down of myself*. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." In this view, the whole aspect and character of our Savior's sufferings are entirely changed. He had a right to interpose for the salvation of sinners, if he pleased; and if *he* was willing to make the sacrifice, there was no injustice or cruelty, on the part of the Father, in suffering him to do it. So far from this, there was an exhibition here made of goodness, of mercy, of abounding grace, such as the universe never witnessed. Instead of being inconsistent with the love of God, the atonement was a most astonishing fruit and manifestation of love. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

I remark again, that the Christian doctrine of *election* is not at all inconsistent with the declaration that "God is love." I say the *Christian* doctrine of election; for no one, with the Bible before him, can doubt that this is a Christian doctrine. There is as much evidence of it, in the Scriptures, as there is of the doctrines of depravity, of the atonement, or of regeneration by the Holy Spirit. But what is this so much perverted, and by many detested, doctrine of election? It supposes, first of all (what is certainly true), that the entire race of man is already in a fallen, ruined state, sinners against God, and deserving to be cast off for ever; and it represents the great Sovereign of hea-

ven as resolving, out of mere mercy, and from all eternity, to interpose and save a part of them. It supposes that, in determining what part to save, he acted, not from partiality, or envy, or caprice, but from the best of reasons—the promptings of infinite wisdom and love. It further teaches, that though foreseen goodness in the elect was not the ground of their election, yet holy character entered into it, and made an essential part of it. God saves all those, and only those, who love and obey him; and this he purposed to do, before the world began. Such is, in brief, the doctrine of election, as held by orthodox ministers and Christians. And now I ask: Is there aught in it inconsistent with the Divine benevolence, or contradictory to the idea that “God is love?” God might have left the entire race of rebel men, as he did the rebel angels, to the dreadful consequences of their own sin; but in his boundless compassion, he resolved to interpose, and rescue a part of them. He determined to provide an all-sufficient Savior, and an almighty sanctifier, and exert his saving power, till infinite wisdom and goodness should say, *It is enough*. He determined to save all those who would come to Christ, put their trust in him, and obey and follow him. And was not this determination on the part of heaven a most gracious and merciful one? So far from being inconsistent with the Divine benevolence, is it not a fruit, a manifestation of that benevolence, sufficient to fill our hearts with rejoicing, and our lips with praise?

I proceed now to remark, that there is nothing in the kindred doctrine of *reprobation*, as understood by orthodox Christians, which is inconsistent with the Divine goodness. Against the doctrine of reprobation, there are even stronger prejudices, on the part of some, than against that of election. It is also a doctrine, like that of election, which is often misrepresented and perverted. It is important to inquire, therefore, first of all, *what is the doctrine of reprobation?* What does it suppose? What inculcate? It supposes, like election, that the whole family of man is in a guilty, ruined state, deserving to suffer the full penalty of the law, which is eternal death; but that God, in mercy, has provided a Savior, and has determined to save vast numbers of them from the impending wrath. He has determined to save all who can consistently be saved—all who will come to Christ, and put their trust in him. And what is he to do with the rest—with those who reject Christ, and will not com to him that they might have life? These he has determined to treat, not harshly or cruelly, but ultimately as they deserve. He has purposed to leave them to the just and terrible consequences of their own sin. In the language of Scripture, he “*gives them up* unto their own hearts’

lusts." "He gives them over to a reprobate mind." He "suffers them to walk in their own way,"* and this he *purposed* to do from all eternity. Such, then, is the doctrine of reprobation; and what is there in it, I ask, which is at all inconsistent with the Divine benevolence? It is not inconsistent with benevolence for God to provide a Savior for lost and guilty men; to offer them salvation on easy terms; and to resolve to save all those of them who will embrace his offers. And is it inconsistent with benevolence for him to *abandon* the rest—to "*give them over to a reprobate mind*"—to leave them to their own chosen way? He does not compel or constrain them to sin. He does not visit them with unmerited punishments. But as they pray to be excused from gospel provisions and blessedness, he says in righteous judgment, *Be excused*. As they reject thy Savior, and turn away from him in pride and scorn, he leaves them to their own chosen way. And so it was his purpose to treat them, before the world began. They "were before of old, ordained to condemnation." Jude 4.

Perhaps some will say: "This is a very different view of the doctrines of election and reprobation, from what we have been accustomed to entertain. We have supposed these doctrines to imply, that by an arbitrary decree, God destines some of the human family to salvation, and others to destruction, without regard to their characters or deserts; rendering it absolutely impossible for the former class to fail of heaven, or for the latter to reach it." In regard to such representations of these doctrines (and they are very common) I only say, that I am in no way responsible for them. I do not hold them or defend them; nor do I know of an orthodox man in the world that does. Thus represented, or rather misrepresented, doubtless the doctrines in question *are* inconsistent with the Divine benevolence; as they certainly are with reason, and the word of God. But understood as above presented, however briefly and imperfectly, they seem to me to accord entirely with the declaration, that *God is love*.

I have only to add, that the doctrine of *eternal punishment* is also in harmony with this declaration. To illustrate this, it is only necessary to take into consideration the nature of God's government, and the relations subsisting between himself and his intelligent creatures. He has made them what they are,—accountable beings, free moral agents, proper subjects of law and government; and he has undertaken to administer a moral government over them. He has given them a perfectly good law to be the rule of their actions, requiring them to love him with all the heart, and to love one another as they love themselves. To those who obey this law, he has promised everything desirable and glorious by way of reward; while against those who transgress it, he has

* Ps. 81: 12. Rom. 1: 28. Acts 14: 16.

denounced a terrible but a just punishment. Is there anything inconsistent with goodness, *thus far*, in the administration of God towards his creatures? Surely, it was good in him to make them what they are—rational, accountable, immortal beings. It was good in him to give them such a holy law; and to guard it with such righteous sanctions; and to institute for them, and over them, such a perfect moral government. And if it was good in God to *institute* such a government, must it not be equally good to maintain it? To abandon it, now that he has set it up, would be the extreme of weakness and folly. But how is a government of law to be maintained, unless the laws are faithfully executed? Let any sovereign begin to trifle with his law,—to enact beyond it, or to fall below it; to withhold its rewards when merited, or to remit its penalties when incurred; and how long can such a government be respected? How long can it stand? I repeat, if it was good in the Supreme Being to *institute* a moral government over his creatures, it must be good in him to *maintain* it; and this can be done only by a faithful execution of law. The law must be honored; it must be executed; the obedient must be rewarded; the disobedient must be punished; not one jot or tittle must be suffered to pass from the law; or a government of law *cannot be maintained*.

In this view, any government is just as benevolent in inflicting deserved punishments, as it is in bestowing merited rewards. Our own government is as benevolent in erecting prisons, as in erecting school-houses. It is as benevolent in confining thieves and hanging murderers, as it is in bestowing offices and honors. And the Divine government is as benevolent in shutting up the wicked in the prison of hell, as in receiving the righteous to the joys of heaven. The one is as consistent with love, and is as much the fruit of love—love, in the largest and best sense of the term, as the other.

There is another consideration to be taken into the account, touching not only the justice, but the *benevolence* of the Divine punishments. At an infinite expense, God has opened a way in which sinners of our race may be pardoned and saved. In the fulness of his compassion, he has provided for them a Savior, and is offering them salvation on the freest terms. A portion of them accede to his offers, and receive the blessings of pardon and eternal life. But others turn away in pride and scorn, and pertinaciously refuse the promised grace. They will not come to the Savior, that they might have life. And now what shall God do with such contemners of his law, and despisers of his grace, but to punish them as they deserve? And when he does punish them as they deserve, shall they rise up and impeach his goodness, and charge him with delighting in their blood? O no! Their enlightened consciences, in that day, will not suffer them to utter

such a charge. And the conscience of the universe will not endure to hear it. As the smoke of the wicked ascends up, a broad and black column, for ever and ever, there will be inscribed on that column, in burning capitals, not only that "God is a consuming fire," but that "God is love."

1. In remarking on the subject which has been before us, we see the importance of a right understanding of the declaration in the text. As observed already, this is a favorite passage with the liberal religionists of almost every description. No part of Scripture is so continually quoted and referred to, as this. And no part of Scripture, you will allow me to say, is so continually perverted and misapplied. The love which many ascribe to God, is entirely inconsistent with his justice, or with any proper regard for his own authority, and the honors of his law. He cannot punish the guilty as they deserve—he cannot even provide a *place* of punishment; for *he is love!* His justice must for ever sleep, and his enemies must be controlled by other means, or not at all; for *he is love!*

The love here ascribed to God is obviously a *partial* and *childish* affection. It is a love for his *creatures*, to the neglect of himself. It is a love for a *part* of his creatures, to the neglect of the rest. It is a love for the *worst* part of them, to the neglect of the better part. God loves the impenitent, the incorrigible, the abandoned, so well, that he cannot bear to punish them; and so he suffers them to go on, trampling on his authority, casting dishonor on his name, and disturbing and corrupting the other portions of his dominions, till he has forfeited all respect as a sovereign, and his righteous government is overthrown. Such would be the love of a father for his rebellious children, prompting him to continued indulgence, and forbidding him to restrain and punish till the order of his house was entirely subverted, and himself, his wife, and all the obedient part of his family were literally turned out of doors. Such would be the love of a monarch for traitors and murderers, prompting him to weep and expostulate, when he ought to punish, while every public interest was endangered, and property and life were wantonly thrown away. It is amazing to see the delusion extensively prevailing among sensible people, in relation to this subject. They persist in ascribing a kind of love to the Supreme Being, which is inconsistent with all government; in the indulgence of which not an earthly kingdom under heaven, not a family even, or a common school, could be effectively governed for a single month.

2. The foregoing discussion is adapted to remove one of the principal objections to the orthodox faith. The more common objections to orthodoxy are drawn, not so much from the Bible, as from its alleged inconsistency with the goodness, the benevo-

lence of God. There is an impression on the minds of people generally, even the worst people, that the Bible, in its more obvious meaning, does inculcate the orthodox doctrines. This certainly is the opinion of infidels, rationalists, and those who have cast off the authority of the Bible, almost without an exception. But these doctrines are inconsistent with the moral perfections of Jehovah, more especially with his goodness, and consequently cannot be true. And hence the Bible, which seems to favor them, must be either rejected or explained away. But we have seen in this discourse, that between the orthodox doctrines, rightly stated and explained, and the Divine goodness, there is no discrepancy. These doctrines are but the outbeamings, the manifestations of the Divine goodness, and cannot be inconsistent with it. They harmonize as naturally and as closely with the benevolence of God, as they do with his word; and all objection to them, drawn from the source we are now considering, is without foundation.

3. The character of God, as presented in this discourse, is one infinitely desirable and glorious. The glory of God consists essentially in his goodness. When Moses prayed that God would show him his glory, the answer was: "I will make all my *goodness* to pass before thee;" implying that his goodness and his glory were identical; or at least that the former was essential to the latter. And is not this obviously true? To realize the truth of it, we have only to form a conception of God, as divested of his goodness. Conceive, if you can, of omniscience, and omnipotence, and omnipresence, all under the direction of infinite malice and selfishness; and would there be any glory in such a being? So far from this, would he not be the most hateful and terrible being in the universe—a being from whom no creature could hide, but from whom every creature would desire to flee away? But when we have invested God, as the Scriptures do, with his adorable *natural* perfections, and placed them all under the direction and promptings of infinite goodness; when we contemplate his whole moral character as comprised in benevolence; what character can possibly be more desirable or glorious? What being can be more worthy of our supreme affection, our highest confidence, our devoutest aspirations of love and praise? With infinite wisdom to direct, and infinite goodness to prompt, and almighty power to execute; what can possibly be added to such a character, to render it more complete and perfect? What glorious attribute can be conceived of as existing in any character, which we do not find in the Divine character to perfection? Who would not love such a character as this? And what shall be thought of a race of creatures, of whom the pen of inspiration has recorded,

"They do not like to retain God in their knowledge,"—the language of whose hearts towards God is, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways?"

4. It follows from what has been said, that God is a *perfectly happy being*. The Scriptures have much to say of the *blessedness* of God. He is "the blessed and only Potentate." He "is over all, God blessed for ever." And from the view we have taken of the Divine character, it follows that he *must* be blessed. He has infinite sources of blessedness within himself. "He is good, and he doeth good." He knows that his character is one of infinite, unspotted, and unchangeable goodness; and the consciousness of this is a source of happiness to him, of which no other being in the universe can form any conception.

God knows, too, that in eternity he formed the best and wisest plan of providence—a plan susceptible of no improvement, and needing no change; and he has the satisfaction of seeing this great and glorious plan going into complete effect. No enemy can ever thwart or defeat it. No unforeseen casualty can arise to interrupt it. God's "counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure." He worketh all things in providence after the counsel of his own blessed will. Evils, to be sure, exist under the government of God, which his benevolent heart cannot contemplate without grief; but as these evils are every one of them incidental, in some way, to the greatest possible good, and are suffered to exist because of that good; so the grief which God feels in view of them is but incidental—incidental, in some way, to his own highest happiness. What I mean to say is, that God is happier, on the whole, with them, than he could be without them; happier in the existing order of things, notwithstanding its incidental evils, than he could be in any other; because he knows that the present plan of providence is, on the whole, *the best*,—the most glorious to himself, and the most blessed and happy for the universe. He has, therefore, an infinite satisfaction in it, as a whole; and while he sees the great wheel of his providence rolling on in its appointed course, and everything taking place, in this world and in all worlds, according to the counsels of his blessed will, he is supremely and for ever happy. On this ground, it is easy to vindicate the everlasting blessedness of the Supreme Being. But on no other ground, of which I have any knowledge, is such a vindication possible.

5. It results from the principles which have been established, that it is an unspeakable privilege to live under the government of God. There are multitudes, I know, both in this world and in other worlds, who do not thus regard it. They resist and oppose the government of God. The language of their hearts is:

"We do not like to retain God in our knowledge. Let us break his bands asunder, and cast away his cords from us." But this strange and unnatural rebellion against the government of God is no evidence of its imperfection, and no proof that it is not a privilege—an unspeakable privilege—to live under it. Is it not a privilege to be the child of a great, and wise, and good parent here on the earth, one who protects and controls his household faithfully, and orders all their affairs with kindness and discretion? Is it not a privilege to live under a good government in *this world*, one that is wisely constituted, and faithfully administered, where the interests of the subjects are protected and promoted, and all the ends of government are secured? And, though some of the subjects may be displeased with such a government, and may try to overthrow it, is this any valid argument against it? But if it is a privilege to be subject to a good father on earth, how much more to have an infinitely better Father in heaven? If it is a privilege to be blessed with a good government here, how much more to be under a *perfect* government, and the only perfect government in the universe? What a privilege unspeakable, to have our life and breath, our powers and faculties, our friends, our interests, and all our destinies, in the hands of One, who can make no mistakes, who can do no wrong thing, who will be sure to order everything in wisdom and in goodness, and whose benevolent designs no enemy can ever interrupt or defeat? This privilege, my friends, is ours; and it is our own fault if we do not know it, and rejoice in it. It is our own fault if this thought is not to each one of us, under all circumstances, whether of light or darkness, prosperity or adversity, joy or sorrow, a source of unspeakable and everlasting consolation.

6. If what has been said is true, then *to oppose God*, in any form—to hate his character, resist his government and transgress his laws, must be both unreasonable and dreadful.—Why should any moral, intelligent being be displeased with the *character* of God? Is it not a holy character? Is it not a perfect character? We have seen that it is all comprised in love; that it is a character of infinite and unchangeable goodness. To hate it is, therefore, to hate goodness itself. It is to be displeased with that which is the perfection of moral excellence and glory.

And why should any rise up against the *government* of God? Has he not a *right* to reign? Are we not absolutely *his* creatures, and has he not a right to do what he will with his own? And is not his government wise and good? In all its departments, is it not characterized by *infinite* wisdom, and *infinite* goodness, and infinite and absolute perfection?

And then as to the *law* of God; is it not a perfectly *good* law? It is all comprised in *love*; supreme love to God, and

impartial love to the creatures of God. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself." Now who can urge the slightest objection against such a law as this; or assign any good reason why he should not obey it?

And not only is opposition to God, in every form which it ever assumes, in the highest degree unreasonable, it is also *dreadful*—dreadful, I mean, in its bearing on those who persist in it. In the course they are pursuing, the incorrigible enemies of God have absolutely nothing to hope for, but everything to fear. They sometimes hope in the *goodness* of God; but his very goodness will arm his power against them. They have really more to fear from God, than though he was not good. For if God was not good, his enemies might have some reason on their side, and some ground of hope in their opposition; but now no such hope remains. Besides, if God was not good, he might peradventure be swayed from the path of right, and be induced to favor them in their wicked designs; but such a ground of hope is now impossible. The holiness, the goodness, the perfection of the Supreme Being, connected with his obligations as a Sovereign, bind him to pursue the workers of iniquity with a steady hand, and to overwhelm them—unless they repent—with an utter and an endless ruin. Let, then, the impenitent and the ungodly take warning. Let them not further presume upon the goodness, the patience, the forbearance of Jehovah. Let them not dare the Almighty to the conflict, and venture "upon the thick bosses of his buckler."

The character of God, as it has been here exhibited, is calculated to give us the most exalted conceptions of heaven. For heaven is the very *metropolis* of God's unbounded empire; the palace, the presence-chamber of the great King.

God is no more *really* present in heaven, than he is on earth, or in any other place or world; but he is more *sensibly* present. It is there that he *manifests* himself most peculiarly and graciously. It is there, in a special manner, that he shows forth his glory. And it is this that *endears* heaven to all its blissful and glorified inhabitants. It is this, in fact, which *constitutes* heaven. The language of every heart in that upper world is that of the devoted Psalmist: "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" "In *thy* presence is fullness of joy, and at *thy right hand* are pleasures for evermore."

"Not all the harps above
Can make a heavenly place,
If God his residence remove,
Or but conceal his face."

But from the glorified inhabitants of heaven, God never does conceal his face a moment. For the trial of his people, he sometimes hides his face from them in this world, but never in heaven. His presence and his glory beam forth there—a sun without any dark spots—one clear, unclouded, and eternal day, and all his people rejoice in him, with a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

My beloved hearers, are we prepared to go there? Are we prepared, in the spirit and temper of our minds, to participate in those heavenly joys? Has the love of God been shed abroad in our hearts? Do we delight in his character, and rejoice in his government, and endeavor to do the things that please him, here on the earth? Is it the language of our hearts even here, “Whom have I in heaven but thee?” “Lord, lift thou upon me the light of thy countenance?” In short, has heaven *begun* with us here below? It must be *begun* here, in order to be consummated there. It must be *begun* here, or never. Let no one who hears me be deceived. Let no one trust to an *unfounded* hope, or consent to live *without* hope and without God in the world.